

The President's Daily Brief

27 March 1972

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THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

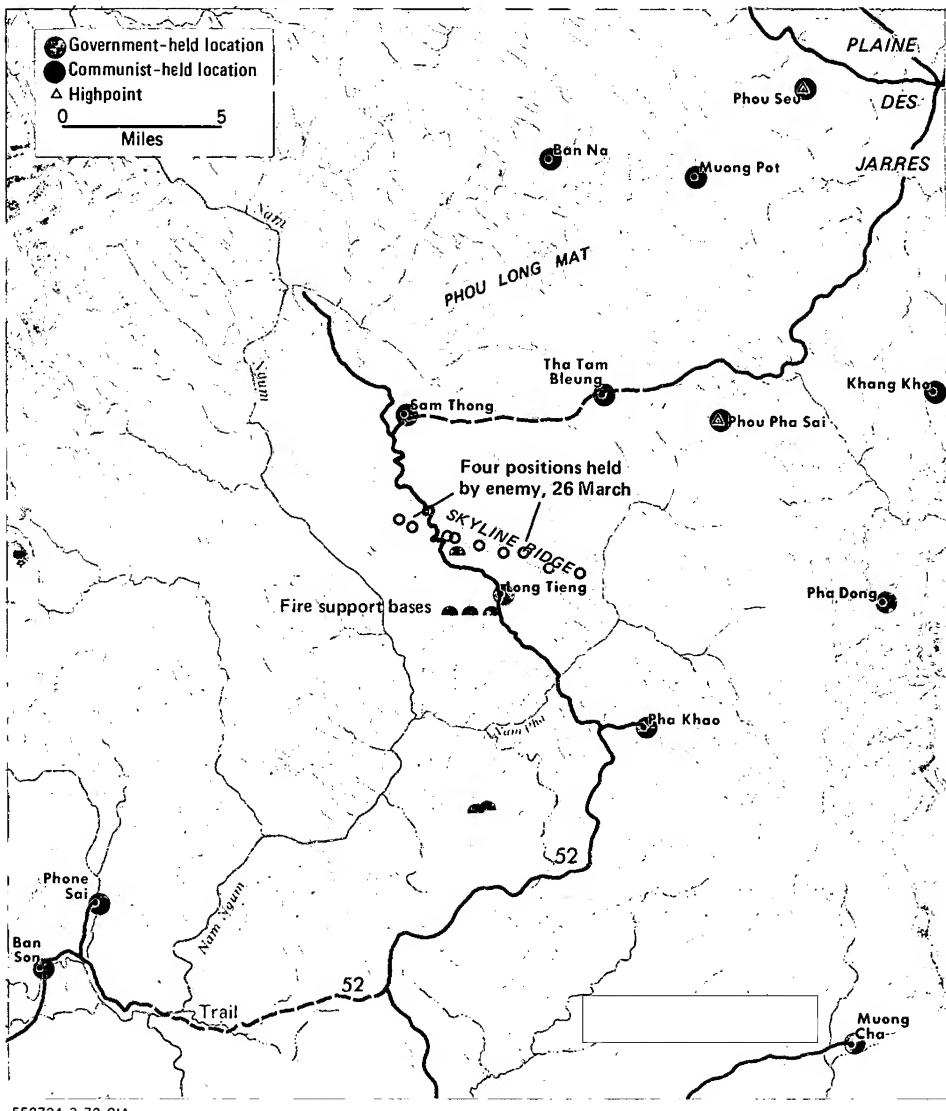
In the Laos fighting this weekend, Vang Pao's irregulars unsuccessfully assaulted enemy positions on Skyline Ridge. (Page 1)

The South Vietnamese are winding up their current drive against Communist bases and supply caches in southeast Cambodia. (Page 2)

The government in El Salvador is back in control following a coup attempt on Saturday. (Page 3)

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LONG TIENG AREA



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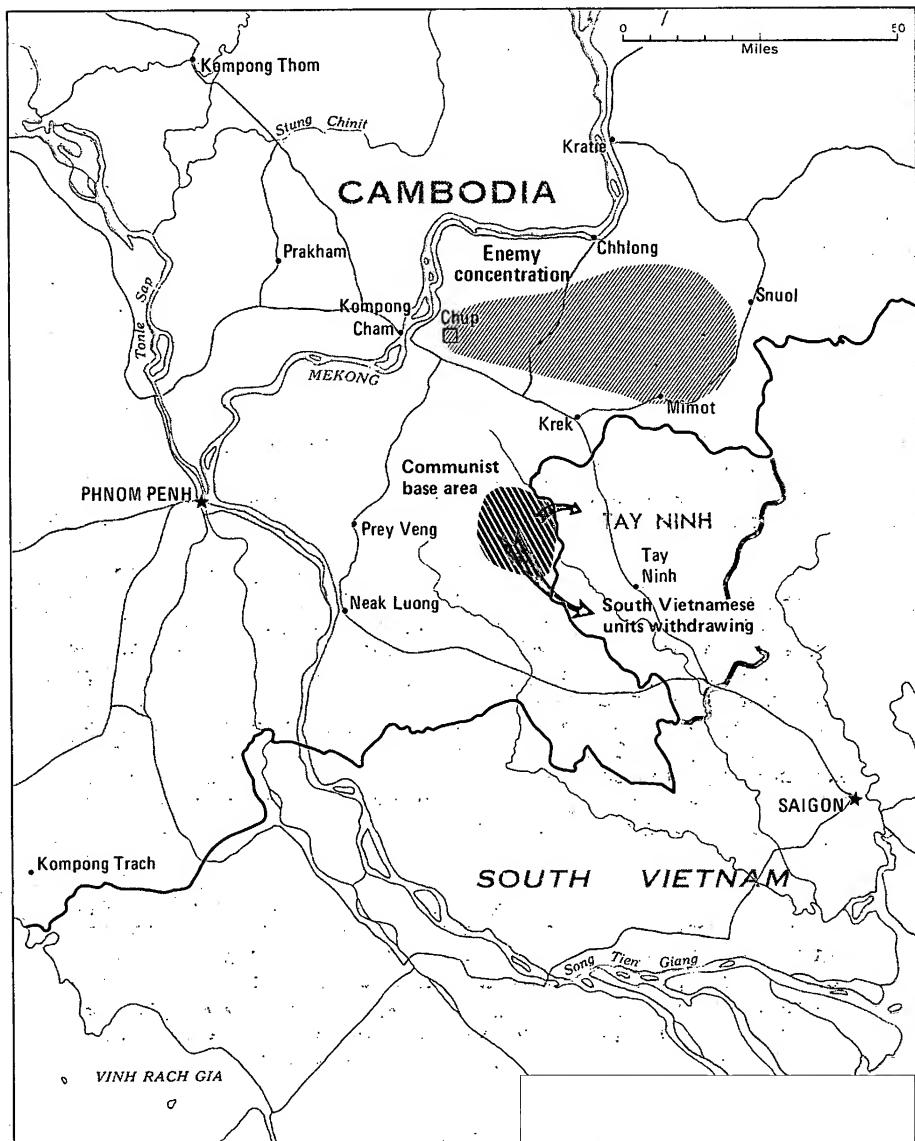
LAOS

Vang Pao's irregulars this weekend unsuccessfully assaulted enemy positions on the western and central portions of Skyline Ridge. Government commanders believe that air strikes and artillery fire have caused heavy enemy casualties, but as yet this assessment has not been substantiated. The irregulars have not suffered heavily as a result of their counteroffensive.

For their part, the North Vietnamese appear to be preparing new attacks on Long Tieng. An intercepted message disclosed that replacement troops are being brought in for "an urgent assignment" and several North Vietnamese units have been ordered to become combat ready. Other intercepted messages indicate that elements of the 312th and 316th divisions have been ordered to prepare for combat near a hilltop overlooking Long Tieng from the south. Small enemy units have been probing the irregulars' defenses in this area.

The object of assaults on government strong points south of Long Tieng would be to neutralize the irregulars' artillery support.

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SOUTH VIETNAM - CAMBODIA

The South Vietnamese are winding up their current drive against Communist bases and supply caches in southeast Cambodia to the west of South Vietnam's Tay Ninh Province. Two of the operation's five battalions have already withdrawn and the others are to follow soon. In the action that began on 9 March, the South Vietnamese uncovered large supplies of weapons and food. Approximately 750 enemy troops were killed by air strikes and artillery attacks.

The task force commander, General Minh, regards his main job as protection of the areas around Saigon and in the past has withdrawn South Vietnamese units from Cambodia on short notice when enemy action has increased in his area. Thus, recent heavy enemy shelling in Tay Ninh most likely triggered the pull-back.

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EL SALVADOR

The government is back in control of the country following a coup attempt that failed to win support from the populace or the main military and security forces. The fall of a major rebel military installation, where President Sanchez was held prisoner, apparently broke the back of the revolt.

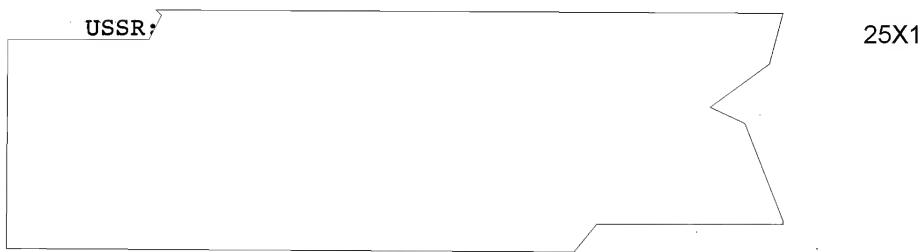
The rebels, led by Colonel Benjamin Mejia, were largely low ranking military officers of two army brigades in the capital. They claimed they were dissatisfied with the government's fraudulent handling of the recent presidential elections. While they did not consult with opposition leaders prior to their move, they later received the public support of Jose Napolean Duarte, a defeated presidential candidate.

Duarte and two other politicians involved have been promised their freedom if they leave the country at once. Many military personnel are under arrest and a number of persons have sought asylum in embassies. The lack of broad military support for the uprising is likely to discourage any other coup attempts prior to inauguration day, 1 July. In the meantime, Sanchez and President-elect Molina, his hand-picked successor, face the task of restoring public confidence.

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